



# Is India the world's Suicide Capital?



**Data from WHO show India ranks far below many developed countries in suicide rate.**

A few months ago, two major news media namely **Forbes India** and **The Daily Guardian** published articles sensationally showing India as the suicide capital of the world.



<https://theguardian.com/why-india-has-become-worlds-suicide-capital/>

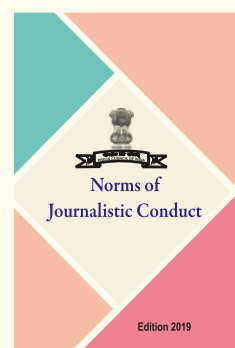


<https://www.forbesindia.com/article/news-by-numbers/india-has-the-second-highest-suicide-mortality-rate/66497/1>

When we wrote to them explaining the incorrect data used and unbecoming interpretation, both withdrew the impugned articles immediately.

**The Norms of Journalistic Conduct - 2019** requires that *"newspapers and news agencies while reporting on suicide cases shall not use sensational headlines; publish stories about suicide prominently. When any factual error or mistake is detected or confirmed, the newspaper should suo-motu publish the correction promptly with due prominence and with apology...."*

Source: Norms of Journalistic Conduct - Edition 2019



Notwithstanding this, the news media tend to sensationalize and spin mostly a negative image about suicide deaths in India even when the authentic data from the World Health Organization (WHO) show an entirely different picture.

**What do the WHO data show?**

World Rank	Country	Suicide rate* per 100,000 population
4	South Korea	28.6
9	Russia	25.1
21	Hungary	16.6
24	USA	16.1
25	Japan	15.3
26	Finland	15.3
30	Sweden	14.7
31	Austria	14.6
32	Switzerland	14.5
35	Sri Lanka	14.0
36	France	13.8
<b>39</b>	<b>India</b>	<b>12.7</b>

Source: WHO Link: <https://apps.who.int/gho/data/view.main.MHSUICIDEv?lang=en>

Year: 2019

\* Crude suicide rate

**India ranks way below USA, Japan, Sweden, Switzerland and many others.**

**India is not the suicide capital of the world.**

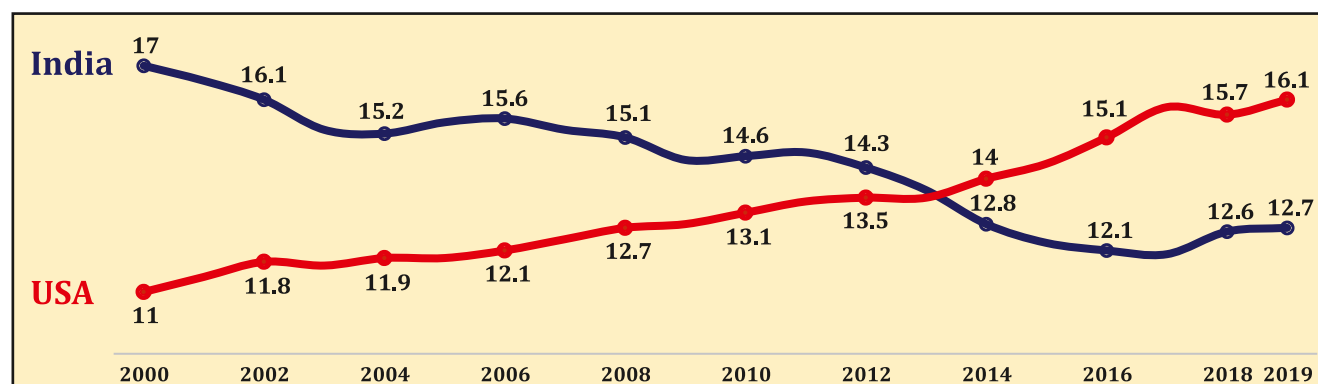
Well, this is not to generate any sense of complacency or self-congratulations.

Remember, even if the suicide rate is <1 per 100,000 population it requires collective efforts towards prevention.

The primary purpose of this advocacy paper is to place on record the authentic data from the WHO and to share related information.

The suicide rate in India has in fact declined **25%** from **17 per 100,000** population in 2000 to **12.7** in 2019. During this period, the suicide rate in the USA has increased **~50%** from **11** to **16.1** per 100,000 population.

### Suicide rate\* per 1,00,000 population. India vs USA



Source: World Health Organization Database (Accessed on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2021)

\* Crude suicide rate

Terming India or for that matter any other country as “suicide capital of the world” is manifestly malafide. The intention is to tarnish the image of the country and nothing else.

### Suicide is a complex issue



Neither linking suicide rate to low availability or poor access to mental health professionals is questionable, nor is it attributable to wealth status.

The USA, Japan, Switzerland, South Korea, Germany etc. are wealthier and have excellent availability and access to mental health professionals. Yet, they suffer from high suicide rate. On the contrary, the African continent, a low-income region, where availability of and access to mental health professionals is inadequate, has very low suicide rate of 6.9 per 100,000 population. This is about 33% less than the world average suicide rate of 9.2 per 100,000.

Suicide is a serious public health problem, says the WHO and holds that for national responses to be effective, a comprehensive, multi-sectorial suicide prevention strategy is necessary.

**“Supportive relationships and community connectedness can help protect individuals against suicides, despite the presence of risk factors”,** says Suicide Prevention Resource Center, USA.

Dr. Abdi Sanati, Specialist Registrar in Addiction Psychiatry, Southwest London, UK asserts, ***“suicide is indeed a complex issue encompassing philosophical, ethical, legal and practical dilemmas. It needs open debate with due consideration to different aspects and point of view”***.

### Suicide reduction target under UN Sustainable Development Goals

The WHO member countries, India included, have committed themselves to working towards the global target of reducing suicide by one third by 2030 under the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) adopted in 2015.

This would mean that the suicide rate must decline 34% from **9.5 per 100,000** in **2015** to **6.3 per 100,000** by **2030**.

A tall order? Time will tell.



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